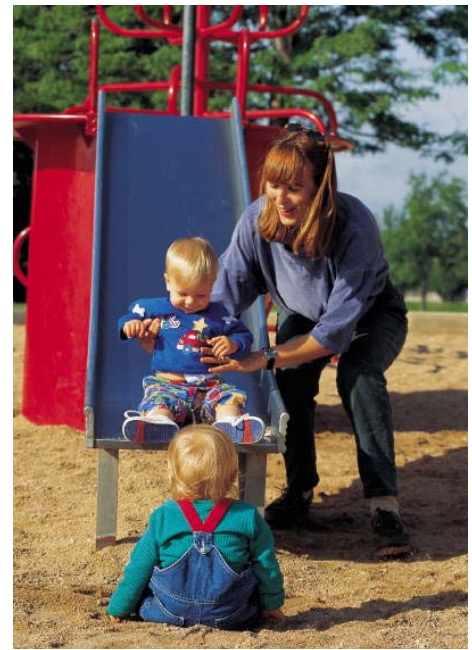


Community

Introduction

Communities strongly influence the lives and lifestyles of their members. The Socio-Ecological Model indicates that individual behavior can be influenced at multiple levels: individual, interpersonal, organizational, community, and public policy. How communities are organized and developed plays a major role in how people choose to live, work, and play. Healthy communities are those that embrace the belief that health is more than merely an absence of disease; a healthy community includes those elements that enable people to maintain a high quality of life and productivity. The US Department of Health and Human Services publication, *Healthy People in Healthy Communities* defines healthy communities as those that 1) offer access to health care services that focus on both treatment and prevention for all members of the community, 2) have roads, schools, playgrounds, and other services to meet the needs of the people in that community, and 3) have a healthy and safe environment.³⁵



In developing this healthy community attitude, communities must also be mindful of the special needs of populations such as seniors, people with disabilities, rural citizens, and Native Americans and other minorities. One such example is the realization that the intensity of recommended



physical activity for the senior population needs to be different than that recommended for the general population. To obtain the nutrition necessary for healthy living, people age 60 or older and their spouses can eat at Senior Meals sites throughout the state. Senior Meals are served in a group setting such as a senior center or community building. Senior Meals may also be delivered to individuals who are homebound. Tailoring environments and resources for persons with disabilities is essential to allowing access to physical activity and nutrition options. Recognizing the special needs of low-income community members as well as those living in rural communities should also be considered as policies are developed.

As communities grow or shrink, they also need to be cognizant of the needs of the general population. For example, modern transportation systems provide convenience, but have led to less walking and physical activity. Parents drive their children to school because of distance, school consolidation, and in some cases, neighborhood safety issues. As small rural communities lose retail businesses and churches, rural residents spend more and more time driving to meet their needs. These and other issues call for recognition and understanding if changes are to materialize that direct community-led strategies for a more active lifestyle.

Community leaders can be instrumental in providing education and leading the charge to coordinate resources to promote healthy lifestyle changes among the members of their community. Community strategies such as expanding bike paths and park systems and promoting healthy food choices in public facilities can be effective. Other success factors include involving many partners in the community. “Communities experiencing the most success in addressing health and quality-of-life issues have involved many components of their community.....Community-based approaches in conjunction with targeted approaches in schools, healthcare, and worksites increase the likelihood for success to improve personal and community health,” according to Healthy People 2010.³⁶

The state of South Dakota has developed the [Strides to a Healthier Community](#), a resource that outlines community-based interventions involving community planning and creating environments for healthy eating and physical activity. The lists of activities in this resource document provide healthy lifestyle strategies for communities to follow. This resource can be found on the <http://www.HealthySD.gov> website. There are a variety of examples being piloted in South Dakota that provide best practices to share with other communities wanting to make change. Municipal government, health care systems, and economic development groups have been the springboard for making change in South Dakota communities. Workgroups of committed individuals have provided guidance to assess community needs and provide recommendations for change. The workgroups evaluated the environment and policy of their community and in some cases conducted surveys to collect information from community members regarding their needs to making healthy choices related to increased physical



activity and healthy eating. Community-wide awareness campaigns, public education opportunities, community walking programs, healthy choices on restaurant menus, environment improvements (such as installing sidewalks), and peer support programs (such as those for breastfeeding mothers) are a few of the results of this important work.

The goal and associated objectives and strategies in this chapter can assist in promoting healthy choices for any community wishing to take the challenge. Although “community” can be defined a number of ways, for the purpose of this plan, communities are defined as the municipalities, their residents, area public lands, and the nearby rural residents. South Dakota has 309 cities, 14 over 5,000 population, 105 between 500 and 5,000 population, and 189 under 500 population. Many of the objectives and strategies can also apply to those living in frontier and rural areas of South Dakota and their non-incorporated, but self-defined, neighborhoods and communities.

Goal, Objectives, and Strategies

Goal: To promote healthy lifestyles and reduce chronic disease in South Dakota communities through healthy eating and physical activity.

Objective 4.1: By 2010, provide documentation of 25 South Dakota communities that have evaluated their policies and environments concerning healthy eating and physical activity and the changes made to help enhance the community’s wellness.

General Strategies:

- Gather baseline data to determine how many communities have comprehensive policies and environments that support healthy eating and physical activity.
- Organize community health councils in each community to develop a wellness plan that supports healthy lifestyles for the communities’ members.

- Increase awareness of the health and economic impact of being overweight and obese through presentations, health fairs, and other communication avenues available in communities.
- Develop a statewide community wellness committee to network and provide communities with “community wellness toolkits” to successfully and effectively implement health promotion and management programs and services.
- Develop a statewide incentive program for communities that offer comprehensive community wellness programs and services.
- Develop a list of best practices to identify and facilitate appropriate interventions and incentives for healthy eating and physical activity.
- Collaborate with partners and policymakers to develop ways to impact environment and policy changes in communities to increase opportunities for community wellness.
- Support health care systems, park and recreation agencies, schools, senior centers, senior residences, and other providers to promote physical activity and healthy eating.
- Implement social marketing/media campaigns that target wide audiences and involve the use of television, radio, newspapers, and magazines.
- Appoint a committee to establish awards criteria and the process by which awards will be distributed to communities that implement wellness plans.

Physical Activity Strategies:

- Recommend that communities assess and plan for healthy community design and/or redesign in both rural and urban areas, to include sidewalks and greenways that provide greater access for physical activity.
- Provide accessible, age-appropriate, and culturally-appropriate physical fitness education and wellness programs to individuals and/or groups.
- Provide incentives for participation in physical fitness education and wellness programs.

- Promote physical activity through approaches such as local facilities, instructor-led classes, physical activity paths, outdoor areas, and access to public facilities such as school gyms, malls, and state and municipal parks.
- Provide support for facilities, equipment, staff, and programs to enhance physical activity and fitness.
- Encourage programs such as time without TV and others that promote time away from TVs, computers, and electronic games and devices as a strategy for families to increase physical activity, i.e., Turn Off the TV Night.
- Support community development that provides for safer communities, such as better street lighting, guard rails, crossing guards, and increased law enforcement.

Healthy Eating Strategies:

- Provide age-appropriate, culturally-appropriate healthy eating education and wellness programs to individuals and/or groups.
- Provide incentives for participation in healthy eating education and wellness programs.
- Create a culture of healthy eating by providing healthy food options in public vending machines.
- Work with local restaurants and the restaurant trade associations to create a culture of healthy eating by providing healthy menu selections.
- Collaborate with local produce growers to provide fresh fruits and vegetables through a farmer's market concept.
- Work with community leaders, businesses, and organizations to provide affordable and convenient healthy food options at community events.
- Collaborate with community leaders and garden clubs to create policies and designate areas for community gardens.

- Implement campaigns to educate parents and community members on the benefits of good health which includes a healthy attitude towards appropriate portions and selection of foods according to the “My Pyramid” recommendations.
- Implement campaigns to educate parents and community partners on the importance of family meal times for healthy eating and weight maintenance.
- Create programs in which local schools, youth organizations, child care centers, senior nutrition centers, health care facilities, and grocery stores collaborate in buying to improve access to increased food options and healthy food choices on a consistent basis.
- Develop materials for restaurants and convenience stores to include healthy choices with appropriate portion sizes for children.

Breastfeeding Strategies:

- Collaborate with community and service organizations to develop incentives to promote breastfeeding.
- Promote the development of “breastfeeding-friendly” daycare facilities.
- Establish public places where women can breastfeed their children in a private, comfortable setting.
- Select eight communities that will pilot a breastfeeding peer-counseling project, at least one of which is an American Indian community.
- Promote and provide breastfeeding resources to community policymakers.
- Implement media campaigns directed at fathers and others who influence a woman’s decision to breastfeed.

Objective 4.2: By 2008, develop and implement a statewide data collection system to evaluate the nutrition and physical activity policies and environments of South Dakota communities.

Strategies:

- Establish criteria for communities that define comprehensive policies and environments that support healthy eating and physical activity.
- Choose communities that will pilot the data collection form and process.
- Create a database system to input programming outcomes and share data.

